

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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CINCEUR VAIHINGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 14123

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GW, NATO, FR

SUBJECT: FRG-FRENCH FONOFF-DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS

REF: PARIS 21463

BEGIN SUMMARY. ADMIRAL TREBESCH (FMOD, CHIEF POL/MIL AFFAIRS) WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR INCREASED DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH FRANCE FOLLOWING FRG-FRENCH FONOFF-DEFENSE MINISTRY TALKS IN PARIS ON SEPT 21. HE FOUND FRENCH ATTITUDES ON DEFENSE MATTERS MORE RIGID THAN DURING THE RECENT LEBER-GALLEY DISCUSSIONS LAST MAY IN BONN AND THOUGHT PROSPECTS FOR BETTER FRG-FRENCH DEFENSE COOPERATION HAD DIMINISHED. END SUMMARY

1. TREBESCH EXPRESSED GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE FRENCH HAD SHOWN NO MOVEMENT IN DEFENSE QUESTIONS DURING THE TALKS. CONTRARY TO HIS HOPE THAT THEY
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WOULD SHOW GREATER FLEXIBILITY.

TREBESCH SAID THAT THE FRENCH ATTITUDE HAD BEEN RIGID AND UNYIELDING. FOR INSTANCE, THE FRENCH DELEGATION EMPHASIZED THEIR DISTRUST OF U.S. ABILITY TO MAINTAIN CURRENT TROOP LEVELS IN EUROPE AND BITTERLY CRITICIZED THE U.S.-SOVIET NUCLEAR AGREEMENT TO PREVENT WAR. ON THE LATTER TOPIC THE FRENCH INSISTED THAT IT FORESHADOWED A U.S. ATTEMPT TO DECOUPLE THE U.S. NUCLEAR DETERENT FROM CONVENTIONAL FORCES AND THAT U.S. POLICY NOW CLEARLY AIMS AT KEEPING ANY EUROPEAN CONFLICT LIMITED TO CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS. TREBESCH SAID THE FRG DELEGATION, HEADED BY FONOFF POLITICAL DIRECTOR VAN WELL, TRIED TO REFUTE THE FRENCH ARGUMENTS DRAWING AT LENGTH ON THE EXPLANATIONS WHICH DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER RECEIVED FROM SECRETARY SCHLESINGER IN WASHINGTON IN HIS AUGUST VISIT. THE GERMANS WENT INTO DETAIL EXPLAINING THE VARIOUS REASONS FOR THE SHIFT WHICH OCCURRED IN THEIR VIEWS BETWEEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT AND LEBER'S CONVERSATIONS WITH U.S. DEFENSE OFFICIALS. TREBESCH THOUGHT THE GERMAN EXPLANATIONS MIGHT HAVE QUIETED SOME OF THE FRENCH CONCERNS BUT GIVEN THE STRONG FRENCH VIEWS ON THE MATTER HE WAS NOT SURE.

2. TREBESCH HAD THE IMPRESSION THE FRENCH HAVE NOT YET COMPLETED THEIR REVIEW OF DEFENSE POLICY (REFTEL) AND THAT IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO JUDGE WHAT THE OUTCOME OF IT MAY BE. THE TOPIC OF FRENCH RELATIONS TO NATO AROSE AT ONE POINT AND THE FRENCH OUTRIGHT REJECTED ANY SUGGESTION THAT THEY MAY EVENTUALLY ENTER INTO CLOSER COOPERATION WITH THE MILITARY SIDE OF NATO. ON THE OTHER HAND, TREBESCH THOUGHT THAT THE FRENCH WERE ACUTELY AWARE OF THEIR CURRENT ISOLATION ON DEFENSE MATTERS, AND HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT PARIS IS SEEKING SOME KIND OF ARRANGEMENT UNDER WHICH THE EUROPEANS WOULD HAVE A SEPARATE AND STRONGER ROLE IN DEFENSE MATTERS. NONETHELESS, THE FRENCH GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF VAGUENESS, IF NOT CONFUSION, ABOUT THEIR IDEAS DURING THE TALKS. TREBESCH SAID THE GERMAN SIDE WAS LEFT WITH THE UNAVOIDABLE CONCLUSION THAT THERE

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ARE NOW POORER PROSPECTS FOR INCREASED FRENCH DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH EITHER THE FRG BILATERALLY OR IN A BROADER EUROPEAN CONTEXT.

3. THE FRENCH ALSO BROUGHT UP AND PUSHED FOR AN EXPANDED ROLE FOR THE WEU IN ARMAMENT COOPERATION DESPITE THE ESTABLISHED FRG POLICY OF PURSUING COMMON ARMAMENT PROJECTS IN EUROGROUP.

CONTRARY TO OTHER OF OUR DEF MIN CONTACTS, TREBESCH
WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT THE FRENCH WOULD EVENTUALLY
ENTER EUROGROUP PROGRAMS FOR ECONOMIC REASONS.

4. COMMENT. IN THE PAST WE HAVE FOUND TREBESCH TO
BE RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS THAT THE
FRENCH WOULD BE MORE AMENABLE TO CLOSER
COOPERATION WITH FRG IN DEFENSE MATTERS.
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